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# Georgia Southern University



GS Men's Soccer Fills Out Coaching Staff For 2018

Head Coach John Murphy adds four newcomers to his staff; Eagles begin preseason training next week

Men's Soccer

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**STATESBORO, Ga.** - Georgia Southern head men's soccer coach [John Murphy](#) announced today the addition of four new members of his 2018 staff as the Eagles prepare to open preseason training this Monday.

Assisting head coach Murphy and previously announced assistant coach [Joe Barber](#) for the upcoming campaign are: assistant coach [Nate Kopunek](#); assistant coach [Stephen Walmsley](#); student assistant coach [Emil Laursen](#) and director of men's soccer operations [Kiera McCormack](#).

Below are capsules of the new staff members for Georgia Southern men's soccer. The Eagles open up preseason practice this weekend and will take the field next Monday night for their annual Blue/White scrimmage. The team will preseason train in Savannah on Tuesday through Thursday, and the first exhibition contest for Georgia Southern is Saturday, August 11, at Presbyterian. The 2018 regular season opener for the Eagles is Friday, August 24, at VCU.

#### **[Nate Kopunek](#) (Assistant Coach)**

[Nate Kopunek](#) joins the Eagles from Yale University, where he helped the Bulldogs to a third-place finish in the Ivy League in 2017, its best finish since the 2005 season, as the team's Director of Operations and Player Personnel. The Bulldogs featured four All-Ivy League selections and also earned an NCAA APR Public Recognition award.

Prior to Yale, Kopunek spent four seasons at George Mason University, helping the Patriots to a No. 12 national ranking and a final RPI of 33 in 2014. George Mason featured one All-American and three All-Region performers in his time there, and the Patriots also had players signed by both the New England Revolution and the Philadelphia Union of MLS.

Kopunek also has extensive club experience, coaching on the AC Connecticut Jrs staff as well as Maryland United FC, the Baltimore Bays Chelsea USSF Development Academy and the Fewster FC club. He has also assisted with DC United game day operations since 2007.

A native of Annapolis, Md., Kopunek is a 2014 graduate of Towson, earning his bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in legal studies. He also holds a USSF National D License, a United Soccer Coaches Goalkeeping Level 1 Diploma and a United Soccer Coaches Special Topics Diploma: The Art of the Assistant.

"Nate has worked for two very good programs in George Mason and Yale," Coach Murphy said. "He brings a well-rounded skillset to our staff. In his role as Director of Student-Athlete Development, he will better connect our players and program with all levels of academia, social expectations and standards - both on and off campus - along with sports science and University-sponsored programs such as EIT and student-athlete wellness. He is a detail-oriented coach with a personable approach with the players and staff. I look forward to seeing his impact on our program."

#### **[Stephen Walmsley](#) (Assistant Coach)**

Stephen Walmsley begins his first season as a graduate assistant coach for Georgia Southern men's soccer in 2018.

Walmsley joins Georgia Southern from Australia, where he has worked as a physical education teacher at Ocean Reef Senior High School, a specialist soccer school in Western Australia.

Prior to working in Australia, Walmsley served as a player and head coach for UMF Tindastóll in the Icelandic 2nd Division. As the youngest head coach in the country in 2017, Walmsley led Tindastóll to solidifying a place in the 2nd division after promotion from the 3rd division in 2016. During the 2016 season, Walmsley was named "Besti Leikmaður" (Player of the Season) as Tindastóll embarked upon a 17 game winning streak to clinch the "3.deild" title.

A graduate of Central Connecticut State University in 2015, Walmsley played four seasons for the Blue Devils, serving as captain from his sophomore year, helping the team to win the Northeast Conference regular season title on two occasions in 2011 and 2013. He received his bachelor's degree in Physical Education Teaching and was awarded the Coca Cola award as the highest achieving male student athlete as a senior. Walmsley also played four seasons in the PDL for Ocala Stampede, winning 4 straight southeastern championships and two Southern Conference championships, along with 2 final four appearances in 2014 and 2015.

Before coming to the United States, Walmsley played for Australian A-league club Perth Glory and captained his state of Western Australia as a youth player. A native of Liverpool, England, he also spent time at several Premier League academies such as Liverpool, Everton and Aston Villa.

Walmsley is currently pursuing his master's degree in professional communication and leadership at Georgia Southern.

"Stephen comes highly recommended and has a great background in the game as both a player and as a coach," Coach Murphy said. "During a lengthy vetting process for this position, his international experience separated him from an extensive candidate pool. I expect him to transition quickly with us both on and off the field."

#### **[Emil Laursen](#) (Student Assistant Coach)**

Laursen will serve as a student assistant coach for the Eagles in 2018 after playing three seasons for Georgia Southern, becoming the school's first First-Team CoSIDA Academic All-American men's soccer honoree in 2017. In three seasons at Georgia Southern, Laursen earned All-Sun Belt Conference honors twice and was the league's Defensive Player of the Year in 2016. A four-time SBC Defensive Player of the Week, Laursen appeared in 43 career games, scoring five goals - including three game-winners - while logging 3,743 minutes of action.

Laursen suffered a career-ending injury last season, so he will assist the Eagle coaching staff in 2018 while finishing his undergraduate degree in Finance from Georgia Southern.

A native of Silkeborg, Denmark, Laursen played club football with AGF Aarhus and Skovbakken IK. He was selected to practice with the first team at AGF Aarhus after making 21 appearances with the U19 squad, while earning the title "Mr. AGF" for living up to the core values of the club (passion, engagement, responsibility and respect).

"Emil will go down as one of the greatest soccer players in the history of Georgia Southern men's soccer," Coach Murphy said. "This Fall, he will continue to be a guiding force for our team both on and off the field. He is a consummate competitor and, more importantly, a winner. I am proud that he will be with us in this new capacity."

#### **[Kiera McCormack](#) (Dir. of Men's Soccer Operations)**

Kiera McCormack begins her first season as the Director of Men's Soccer Operations for Georgia Southern in 2018.

A former Georgia Southern student-athlete, McCormack graduated in May of 2018 with her bachelor's degree in sport management. She spent four seasons with the GS Swimming & Diving team, specializing in distance events and serving as a team captain during her junior year. She received the GUSPY Award for the Best Female Comeback Athlete in 2017-18 for working her way back from an injury suffered during her junior season to swim again as a senior. McCormack also earned the team's Eagle Award in 2016.

A native of Fishers, Ind., McCormack graduated from Hamilton Southeast HS in 2014. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in sport management from Georgia Southern.

"Having Kiera join our staff is another example of our program moving forward," Coach Murphy said. "She was an outstanding student-athlete here at Georgia Southern, so she understands what it takes to be a successful Eagle. Her work will include all aspects of team administration, student-athlete support, gameday operations and developing our supporter's group, GATA FC. Kiera will certainly add a very important component to our soccer program here at Southern."